

## [The Chief Mate]

Folklore Dup.

FORM A Circumstances of Interview

Washington

J. J. Stauter

Seattle, Washington

December 20, 1938

"The Chief Mate"

1. Anonymous as told by a "wharfinger"

2. December 20, 1938

3. Seattle waterfront

4. None

5. None

6. None given Folklore FORM B Personal History of Informant

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## Library of Congress

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"The Chief Mate"

Anonymous - as told by a waterfront "wharfinger"

1.

2.

3.

etc. (Not available)

THE CHIEF MATE "There used to be a queer character on the Seattle 'front that we used to call: "The Chief Mate". About all he owned was an extensive collection of discarded ship's officer's caps, and he used to parade slowly up and down the board-walk in a different one every day. Likely as not, he'd wear them inside out, for variety. Nobody seemed to know where or how he lived. He never talked to anybody. But every once in a while he would scare the daylights out of a person by coming up behind them and suddenly yelling " Whrooo! ". Then he'd pass on without a word and without looking back to see the effect.

"They say that he was really a first mate on a sound steamer years ago. He was married, and had a kid about three years old. The tale runs that he was sending his wife and kid out on a coast passenger boat to visit her mother. This was about the time of the gold rush, and every boat man loaded down scandalous. This one man loaded so she had a starboard list, and just as she had pulled out of the slip and was turning around, she capsized, with the dock swarming with women and children waving good-by. That was the last he saw of his family.

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“He never went to see sea again. They say he tried a few shore jobs, but the shock had unbalanced his mind so that he just didn't seem to give a hoot about anything. Finally he just took to walking up and down the waterfront, wearing his funny hats.

“Once in a while a longshoreman will try to badger him, but they seldom ever try it again. The poor devil would draw himself up for a second or two like he was a First Mate again, then look hurt and pitiful, mumble a few words nobody could understand, and hustle on his way, back and forth, from Pier 14 to the Luckenbach dock. The skimmers and longshoremen found out there was no sport in devilling the poor bugger, especially after someone had told them how he is supposed to have gotten that way. So all the regular people an the 'front just pay no attention to 2 The Chief gate (Cont.)

him at all — that seems to be what bothers him least. The only people who turn their heads and stare at him, or snicker, or make wisecracks, are the ones that don't know the front, and don't belong down here.”

Told by anonymous, a wharfinger.